

Business & Industry

Most American adults now spend at least half of their waking hours at work. As overtime, commuting time, and demands of family life increase, the time available for physical activity and healthy eating has become increasingly diminished. In this changing environment, worksite wellness programs are becoming more critical than ever.

Business and industry can and should play an essential role in maintaining and improving the overall health and well-being of their employees. There is significant evidence documenting that healthy employees are more productive, take less sick leave, and incur lower medical costs. The total cost of obesity to U.S. companies has been estimated at \$13 billion per year (*DHHS, 2003*). Between 1987 and 2001, obesity drove 27% of the medical cost increases (*Health Affairs, 2004*). Additionally, obesity is associated with 39 million lost work days and 239 million restricted activity days (*Obesity Research, 1998*). Worksite health promotion benefits employers in other ways as well, with improved employee morale, good-will toward management, and reduced employee turnover (*Partnership for Prevention, 2001*).

Worksites can support healthy behaviors by creating opportunities for physical activity within the normal workflow of a business day. Most people eat at least one meal a day at the worksite. Food available at work, in cafeterias, through vending machines, and at on-site meetings often determines what people eat during their workday. Too often, this food is of poor nutritional value and does

The workplace environment can have a major impact on health-related behavior, including healthy nutrition and adequate physical activity.

not support efforts to adopt healthy eating habits.

In a recent survey by the USC School of Public Health, 90% of the companies who responded had food available to employees during working hours. This survey also indicated that few worksites had a physical activity health promotion policy. Only 8% of companies reported they had a written policy to include physical activity into employees' schedules, and only 15% of companies allowed employees to use paid work time and/or flex time for physical activity. Several corporate leaders in South Carolina have had the vision for improving the health

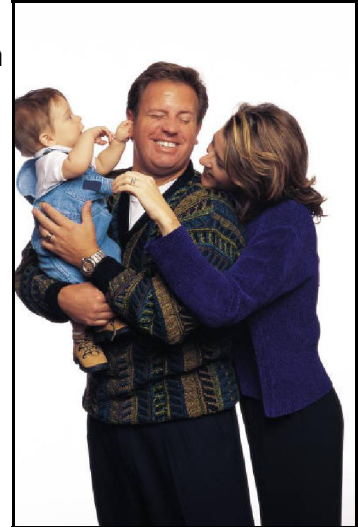
and wellbeing of their employees and have established worksite wellness programs. This survey documented that employers with a designated wellness coordinator or a wellness committee were much more likely to implement worksite wellness initiatives (*SC DHEC CVH 2003*).



Of mothers enrolled in a worksite breastfeeding program implemented by CIGNA corporation, Working Well Moms, 70% were still breastfeeding after 6 months. CIGNA also reports an annual \$240,000 savings in health care expenditures and \$60,000 annual savings in reduced absenteeism among breastfeeding mothers enrolled in Working Well Moms.

(Supporting moms is good business: CIGNA's corporate lactation program pays off.)

The majority of mothers with children under 3 years of age now work full-time. One-third of these mothers return to work within 3 months and about two-thirds return within 6 months after the baby is born. Women report that re-entering the workforce after maternity leave is a significant barrier to the continuation of breastfeeding. The health benefits to mother and child from breastfeeding are well documented, but there are advantages for the employer as well. Benefits for companies include lower health care costs, improved employee satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and a better corporate image (AAHP, 2001). Company policies which support breastfeeding can make a critical difference in whether a woman decides to continue breastfeeding after she has returned to work (DHHS, 2000b).



Resources used in the development of the following activities include:

- *Community Guide for Preventive Services*
- *University of Minnesota's Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events*
- *National Business Group on Health's Healthy Vending*
- *CDC's Guidance for Healthy Eating at Work*
- *Healthy Worksite 2010*
- *HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding.*

In selecting strategies for action to support worksite wellness partners specified that bringing industry leaders, employees, and health professionals together to advise and direct implementation plans and provide peer education and advocacy on health promotion programs would be crucial. Partners were also mindful of the diversity of the South Carolina workplace, which ranges from giant multi-national corporations to small business owners in rural communities. The strategies selected work across many levels of the SEM, emphasize policy and environmental supports, and can be adapted to meet the resource levels of the individual company. Even small businesses can have a big impact on health.



Examples of Activities

Implement Environmental/Policy Approaches to Worksite Physical Activity

Encouraging employers to provide low-cost, incentive-based physical activity programs; offering flexible scheduling or work breaks to create time and opportunity for regular physical activity during the workday; and changing the work environment to create access to walking or jogging trails are approaches SCCOPE partners will pursue.

Supporting Evidence: Community Guide for Preventive Service

Goal 1. Increase the percentage of South Carolinians who meet current age-specific recommendations for regular physical activity.



Create Environments Supportive of Breastfeeding Mothers

SCCOPE will work to increase the number of worksites incorporating policy and environmental strategies supportive of breastfeeding. Business leaders will be provided education on the Return on Investment (ROI) and health benefits of breastfeeding. This advocacy building approach will not only educate employers on the cost effectiveness of breastfeeding promotion, but will also provide guidance for developing and implementing a model program inclusive of education, supportive policies, and environmental changes.

Model programs include strategies such as providing a private area for nursing, refrigerator for storing of expressed milk, access to a lactation professional for counseling and support, support groups for working mothers with children, and policies to ensure that mothers are allotted breaks from work to support breastfeeding.



Supporting Evidence: HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding

Goal 3: Increase percentage of South Carolina mothers who breastfeed for at least six months.





The DHEC Strategic Plan 2005-2010 makes worksite wellness a priority for its employees. In spring 2005, the CVH Division, along with the entire Bureau of Community Health and Chronic Disease Prevention, kicked off the Capital Health worksite wellness program. Capital Health, in an effort to reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors, promotes increased physical activity, improved nutrition, healthy weight, and smoking cessation through policy and environmental strategies.

Provide Healthy Choices In Vending Machines, Cafeterias, and Meetings

Employers will be provided with the tools needed to improve the nutritional value of foods available at the work place to assist in providing healthy choices. For example, companies may choose to replace unhealthy food in vending machines with healthier snacks that are lower in fat, salt, and calories than traditional choices. In cafeterias, canteen, or other onsite venues, examples of healthy changes include providing nutrition information for all items served, adding more fruits and vegetables to meal choices, decreasing fried foods, offering leaner choices of meats, and reducing portion sizes. Additionally, information will be provided to assist employers on healthy catering options for trainings, conferences, and meetings.

Supporting Evidence: Healthy Vending

Goal 4. Increase the percentage of South Carolinians who achieve and maintain a healthy weight.



Business and Industry Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1: Increase the percentage of South Carolinians who meet the current age-specific recommendations for regular physical activity.

Objective 1: By July 31, 2008, at least 50 worksites in SC will promote physical activity for employees.

Strategies

1. Employers will encourage daily physical activity by implementing strategies such as providing easy access to stair-wells while limiting access to elevators, supporting and promoting lunchtime walking/running clubs or company sports teams, and providing on-site facilities such as walking trails and bike racks.
2. Increase the number of worksites providing weight-related physical activity educational materials to employees based on current, evidence-based information.
3. Employers will provide opportunities for employees to become engaged in self-management and goal setting relative to physical activity.
4. Employers and businesses will promote and support community efforts to reduce TV time and increase physical activity, such as "Turn off TV Week" and "Walk to School Day."
5. Employers will be provided resources to implement low cost, incentive-based physical activity programs.
6. Employers will be provided with a list of non-profit agencies that can provide low or no-cost educational materials.

Objective 2: By December 31, 2008, at least 25 worksites in SC will have adopted policies supportive of physical activity.

Strategies

1. Provide flexible scheduling to allow employees to participate in exercise before work, during lunch, or after work.
2. Provide reimbursement for employees who are members of exercise facilities or participate in classes.
3. Provide discounted rates for membership to fitness and recreation facilities.
4. Provide incentives to employees participating in physical activity programs.
5. Provide up to 3 hours of paid time per week for employees to participate in physical activity.



Goal 3: Increase the percentage of South Carolina mothers who breast-feed for at least six months.

Objective 1: By July 31, 2010, at least 10 worksites in SC will promote and support breastfeeding practices in the workplace.

Strategies

1. Employers will be provided with education on ROI (return on investment) and health benefits of breastfeeding.
2. Facilities will support breastfeeding by providing a private area for mothers, and equipment, such as hospital grade breast pumps and refrigerators for storage of expressed breast milk.
3. A policy will be implemented to ensure that nursing mothers will be allotted the necessary breaks from work to express milk.
4. Employers will educate all employees on the benefits of sustained breastfeeding.

Goal 4: Increase the percentage of South Carolinians who achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Objective 1: By July 31, 2008, at least 50 worksites in SC will promote healthy nutrition in the workplace.

Strategies

1. SCCOPE will ensure that employers have current, science-based nutrition information and resources.
2. Increase the number of worksites providing nutrition-related educational materials to employees, such as the 5 A Day program.
3. Increase the number of worksites providing access to nutrition counseling by a registered dietitian.

Objective 2: By July 31, 2008, at least 25 worksites will adopt healthy nutrition policies.

Strategies

1. SCCOPE Workgroup on Business and Industry will develop and disseminate a *Nutrition in the Workplace Policy Guide*.
2. Employers and agencies will provide opportunities for employees to provide feedback on healthy food policy development.



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3. Provide healthy choices of food and drink (water, juice, yogurt, fruits, vegetables, salads, low fat foods) in vending machines, snack rooms, and/or cafeteria.
 4. Provide healthy refreshments at worksite events, meetings, and conferences.
 5. Require vendors/food service providers to visibly post nutrition information for all foods served and sold.
 6. Employers, when feasible, will provide space and encourage employees to eat at a separate area away from their workstation.

Objective 3: By July 31, 2009, at least 15 worksites in SC will participate in and promote healthy weight initiatives to include environmental and policy change.

Strategies

1. Form a collaborative group comprised of South Carolina business and industry professionals, employees, and health professionals to advise and consult with SC employers on productivity and health.
2. Identify champions in the business and industry setting to provide peer education on the ROI of programs addressing nutrition, physical activity, and breastfeeding.
3. Increase the number of SC employers with a wellness council or committee responsible for worksite wellness.
4. Provide training for such individuals or groups, for example, at the SCCPPA 2006 fall conference.

Objective 4: By July 31, 2010, at least 15 worksites in SC will provide and support on-site healthy weight-related activities and initiatives.

Strategies

1. Employers will request, from insurers, weight-related benefit/cost and utilization data for their employee population.
2. Employers will perform a healthy weight policy and environmental assessment of their worksite.
3. Employers will provide access to wellness counseling services to include nutrition, breastfeeding, weight loss, physical activity, and stress management.
4. Employers will offer health risk appraisals and provide targeted interventions to those with a BMI of 25 or greater.
5. Employers will provide incentives for those employees participating in a disease prevention program or disease management program containing a healthy weight component.



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6. Employers will provide incentives for those employees who document the attainment of established and significant weight reduction goals or who are at a healthy BMI.
 7. The business community will help develop and support the delivery of messages concerning overweight, obesity, and productivity on radio, TV, and elsewhere.
 8. SCCOPE will create a Healthy Worksite Award Program to include recognition and incentives for businesses exhibiting leadership in healthy weight-related policies and programs.
 9. Designate a week or month, sponsored by the State or by SCCOPE, which challenges employers to communicate healthy weight initiatives to their employees and community (Employee Health and Fitness Day).

